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# BACK BAY GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

## RECOMMENDATIONS ON DESIGN AND SIGN CONTROLS

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BACK BAY STUDY

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## RECOMMENDED ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN GUIDELINES AND SIGN CONTROLS

The following recommendation is designed to protect and enhance the visual character of the Back Bay area. It attempts to spell out design guide lines and design controls for rehabilitation, new construction, and signs. It will be used by the residents, the developers, the city officials, the Back Bay Architectural Commission, by the architects who will design the buildings, and by designers. It tries not to be restrictive, but to delineate design goals and to exercise controls where necessary.

### A. H-5 RESIDENTIAL AREA

(bounded by Back Street, Arlington Street, the alley between Commonwealth Avenue and Newbury Street and Charlesgate East)

#### 1. RECOMMENDED ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

All new construction, any alteration to the exterior of existing buildings and all signs within this area are subject to the approval of the Back Bay Architectural Commission. It is recommended that this proposal serve as design guidelines for this purpose.

a.* The present landscaped setback shall be maintained throughout.

b.* All buildings facing east-west streets shall provide areas for "human occupancy"** along those streets.

c.* All buildings facing the north-south streets between the Esplanade and the alley between Newbury Street and Commonwealth Avenue shall provide areas for "human occupancy"** wherever possible.

If the dimensions of the property make it impossible to accomplish this goal, a garage serving the occupants of the proposed residential development may face these streets provided the parked cars are hidden from view. Such garages must be entered from the rear alley, whenever possible.

d.* Canopies shall not be permitted unless the building contains a place of public assembly or unless the entrance serves at least 25 apartments. Such canopy, if permitted, shall be the canvas type canopy and shall not extend beyond the property line.

e. Bay windows in scale with the existing ones and of similar proportions are recommended for all new construction in order to maintain unity and to make lower floor heights, which will prevail in new construction for reasons of economy, less obvious. Such bay windows shall project no more than five feet from the building line and shall not be constructed within 18" of the party line. The width

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NOTE: * Items a., b., and c. are part of the zoning controls. They are included in this proposal for the sake of completeness only.

**The term "human occupancy" is intended to include space which is used for residential or ancillary uses but to preclude parking, loading or servicing.

of the bay windows shall not exceed 15 feet and the space between them shall not be less than 8 feet. Above the third floor, the bay windows may be replaced by balconies of the same width and projection as the bay windows, provided the vertical element of the bay windows below is visually continued. Balconies in the form of projecting slabs with a light metal railing are not recommended.

f. All openings to be of similar scale and proportion as those of existing buildings. "Strip windows" are not recommended.

g. Building materials are to be predominantly masonry. Metal may be used as has been done on the bay windows of a number of the traditional buildings. Masonry alone will not insure harmony with the existing architecture, as can be seen on a number of barren and drab brick facades, which have been constructed during the last 50 years. The use of shiny and/or brightly colored materials such as baked enamel, natural aluminum, etc., is not recommended.

h. It is recommended that the same guide lines and controls apply to the north-south streets. Bay windows may project over the public way provided a clearance of twelve feet is maintained.

i. The above guidelines and controls shall not apply to the back alleys, with the exception of those regarding the use of building materials.

2. RECOMMENDED SIGN CONTROL

a. Within this area only signs indicating the name of the building, an ancillary use, a permitted professional activity, the name of a club, an association, or a consular office shall be permitted.

b. Signs indicating the name of the building shall not exceed 5 square feet in area, shall be horizontal and shall not project from the face of the building.

c. Signs indicating an ancillary facility, professional or consular offices, or the name of a club or association, shall not exceed two square feet in area, shall be horizontal and shall not project from the face of the building.

d. All signs under a., b., and c. above must be unobtrusive in design and material and must be made of a permanent material. Neon lighting and back lighting of such signs are not permitted. Flashing or animated signs are not permitted.

e. In the back alleys signs are permitted to indicate the name of the building, a service entrance or the entrance to a parking area. Such signs may project at a right angle from the building, extend over the alley provided the underside is at least 14 feet above grade, and provided neon lighting is not used. These signs may be 5 square feet in area.

f. All signs in the residential area are to be below the floor line of the second floor.

g. Free standing signs are not permitted.

B. NEWBURY STREET AND COPLEY SQUARE

All new construction, alteration to the exterior of existing buildings and signs on Newbury Street and on Copley Square are recommended to be under the control of the Back Bay Architectural Commission.

1. RECOMMENDED ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

a.* Set backs and building heights are controlled by the proposed zoning regulations.

b.* There shall be "human occupancy"** in all buildings facing Newbury street and Copley Square.

c.* Any parking structures facing one of the north-south street shall be designed to shield the cars from view.

d.* Access to any parking structure must be from the widened rear alley unless it is proven to be impossible.

e.* Canopies or marquees shall not be permitted unless the building contains a place of public assembly or has 150,000 sq. ft. or more of office or retail area. Such canopy, if permitted, shall be the canvas type, shall not extend beyond the property line and shall be at least 20 feet from the adjacent property.

f. Bay windows in scale with the existing ones and of similar proportions are recommended for Newbury Street in order to preserve the unique character of the street. For dimensions see A.1.e. and A.1.f.

g. Building materials are to be predominantly masonry. Metal may be used as has been done on the bay windows of a number of traditional buildings. The use of shiny and/or brightly colored materials, such as baked enamel, natural aluminum, etc., is not recommended.

h. The above guidelines do not apply to the back alleys, with the exception of those regarding the use of building materials.

2. RECOMMENDED SIGN CONTROLS

a. Only rooted signs (signs advertising an activity within the building or the name of the building or store) are permitted.

b. Roof or billboard signs are not permitted.

c. Animated and flashing signs are not permitted.

d. Exposed neon tubing is not permitted unless it is of high design standards and has been given approval by the Back Bay Architectural Commission.

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NOTES: *Items a., b., c., d., and e. are covered in the zoning controls. They are included for the sake of completeness only.

**The term "human occupancy" is intended to include space which is used for residential, office, commercial, professional or similar functions, but to preclude parking, loading, storage and like functions.

e. Signs which are attached to the face of buildings are to be limited in height to three feet and to a total of 1.5 square feet per lineal foot of property frontage.

f. Projecting signs are permitted provided they do not exceed 10 square feet in area, are at a right angle to the face of the building and do not extend below 9 feet above grade, or project more than 5 feet from the face of the building.

g. All signs are to be below a line 20 feet above the sidewalk.

h. Signs of vertical proportion are not permitted.

i. Objects within the setback area, such as kiosks, banners, flags, canopies, benches, display cases, landscaping, etc., are subject to approval by the Back Bay Architectural Commission and must be part of an overall design for the entire block.

j. Free standing signs are not permitted.

k. For sign control in proposed arcade on the north side of Copley Square, see C.2.j.

3. GENERAL

a. Exemptions:

Signs required by law, such as emergency signs.

b. Non-Conforming Signs:

Signs which are in conflict with these recommendations and in existence on the date of the adoption of this proposal shall be removed within three years.

c. Approval Procedures:

An application must be made to the Back Bay Architectural Commission in the form that it requires. The Commission has 30 days to deliver its findings.

d. Appeals:

There will be the usual provision for appeal from the decision of the Commission.

C. BOYLSTON STREET AND MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE
(Between Boylston Street and the Charles River)

It is recommended that all new construction or alteration to the exterior of existing buildings be under the control of the Back Bay Architectural Commission or some community supported and professionally assisted board. Furthermore, it is recommended that the sign control be carried out by a control mechanism to be developed by the community.

1. RECOMMENDED ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

a.* Set backs, building heights and the dimensions of the proposed arcades on Boylston Street are controlled by the proposed zoning regulations.

b.* There shall be "human occupancy"** on the ground floor of all buildings facing Boylston Street.

c.* Any parking structure shall be designed to shield the cars from view.

d.* Access to any parking structure and to loading and service facilities must be from the rear alley, unless it is proven to be impossible.

e. Building materials to be predominantly masonry. The use of shiny and/or brightly colored materials such as baked enamel, natural aluminum, etc., is not recommended.

f. The above guidelines do not apply to the back alleys, with the exception of those regarding the use of the building materials.

2. RECOMMENDED SIGN CONTROLS

a. Only rooted signs (signs advertising an activity within a building or the name of the building or store) are permitted.

b. Roof or billboard signs are not permitted.

c. Flashing signs are not permitted.

d. Animated or exposed neon tubing signs should not be permitted unless they meet high design standards, and are approved by the design control board.

e. Signs containing an illumination source should be subject to the approval of the design control board.

f. Signs which are attached to the face of buildings are to be limited in height to three feet wide and to a total of 1.5 square feet per lineal foot of property frontage.

g. However, a larger sign which is an integral part of the building (such as signs in masonry) might be permitted on a single-purpose building, subject to the approval of the design control board.

h. Projecting signs are permitted provided they do not exceed 10 square feet in area, are at a right angle to the face of the building and do not extend below 9 ft. above grade or project more than 5 ft. from the face of the building.

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NOTES: *Items a., b., c., and d. are covered in the zoning controls. They are included for the sake of completeness only.

**The term "human occupancy" is intended to include space which is used for residential, office, commercial, professional or similar functions, but to preclude parking, loading, storage and like functions.

i. All signs must be below a line 20 ft. above the sidewalk, with the exception of signs permitted under g.

j. Signs within the arcade may be on the face of the building, the size being limited in accordance with Item f. above, projecting from the face of the building in accordance with Item h. above, or suspended from the soffit of the arcade. Suspended signs cannot exceed 10 sq. ft. in area, must not extend below 11 ft., and must be at least 4 ft. from the party line.

k. Signs of vertical proportion are not permitted.

l. No structures or objects including but not limited to canopies, kiosks, banners, flags, benches, display cases, landscaping, etc., shall be permitted on the sidewalk unless they are proposed as part of a comprehensive block plan and are approved by the design control board.

m. Free standing signs shall be no larger than 10 sq. ft., shall be at least 9 ft. above the sidewalk, but not extend above 16 ft. and shall not be of a vertical proportion.

n. Commercial frontage facing east-west streets for a distance of 100 feet shall be controlled by the sign controls which are appropriate for the remainder of the street.

3. GENERAL

a. Exemptions:

Signs required by law, such as emergency signs.

b. Non-Conforming Signs:

Signs which are in conflict with these recommendations and in existence on the date of the adoption of this proposal shall be removed within three years.

c. Approval Procedures:

An application must be made to the design control board (or whatever guiding mechanism assumes the responsibility) in the form it requires. This body has 30 days to deliver its findings.

d. Appeals:

There will be the usual provision for appeal from the decision. This is applicable to existing as well as new signs.

e. Education Work:

The design board or its equivalent should also engage in educational work and should recommend sign dimensions, appropriate colors, type face, styles, illumination, etc.